

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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WELCH: CRANE PROTECTION ACT SET TO BECOME LAW

INDIANAPOLIS – Legislation co-authored by State Rep. Peggy Welch (D-Bloomington) that will assist in efforts to keep the Crane Naval Warfare Surface Center open has received final approval in the Indiana General Assembly and now awaits the signature of Gov. Mitch Daniels.

House Bill 1022, dubbed the Military Base Protection Act, marks the latest step in Welch's ongoing efforts to maintain the base located in Martin County. Crane is one of many military facilities across the country presently under review by the federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program.

"This legislation extends several critical protections to the Crane site that will help demonstrate our state's support for the facility," Welch said. "It creates a Military Base Planning Council that will analyze ways to enhance the economic potential and benefits of installations like Crane, and provides protections against planning and zoning regulations, as well as immunity from lawsuits covering noise problems and the disruption of telecommunications.

"Through passage of House Bill 1022, we demonstrate our recognition that Crane is critical, not only to our national defense, but also to the economic health of Southwest Indiana," she added. "This bill will give those people lobbying on Crane's behalf in Washington, D.C., another tool to help demonstrate Indiana's commitment to our last active military base and our resolve to protect this base from encroachment."

House Bill 1022 comes on the heels of a measure passed in 2004 that provides economic incentives for businesses that locate new operations in and around military bases in Indiana.

"The legislation approved last year enables us to use the services and expertise provided through Crane as a way to attract industries that can provide critical support," Welch said. "It also helps to strengthen the partnership between the center and surrounding communities, which I think is critical because we must demonstrate that Crane is a vital economic tool that creates and preserves jobs beyond those at the center."

Crane presently employs more than 4,000 people, making it one of the largest facilities in the world and the second-largest employer in Southwest Indiana. The center is involved in the development of ordnance, electronics and electronic warfare technologies and is involved in virtually every ship, submarine, aircraft and missile system fielded by the U.S. Navy.

Welch's efforts on behalf of Crane have enabled the lawmaker to establish an ongoing dialogue with U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Welch was able to question Rumsfeld about the facility's future during a National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) meeting in Washington.

State Rep. Eric Koch (R-Bedford) serves as the primary author of House Bill 1022. State Sen. Brent Steele (R-Bedford) is the primary Senate sponsor.

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